

Sample Syllabus Statement  
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Guidelines for Discussions:

1. *Step up, Step Back.* Be a good listener. Self-monitor your air time and truly listen to what others are saying so you can build on ideas. Don't just rehearse what you want to say next. Wait if you like to take a lot of turns. Remember "Step Up, Step Back." If you tend to wait for others to talk, then consider your own need to "step up." If you tend to dominate discussion, then consider your need to "step back." Engaged listening is just as important as speaking. Ask yourself: Does this build on what is being said? If not, can I write it down and wait for another opening? Please don't be a social loafer. Please contribute by speaking and guiding. If you find a few classes have gone by without speaking, it's probably time to step up your game. And I'll encourage you to look at your classmates when speaking—not just at me.
2. *Be considerate about self-disclosure.* Too much self-disclosure can make others uncomfortable. Ask yourself if contributing a personal anecdote will help to build discussion or contribute to the topic. We have all read one text before class. Your own narrative is important, but we have not experienced it or read it, and your narrative can be difficult text to evaluate or critique as a group, so be judicious in your sharing.
3. *Assume good intention in others- and when needed, go ahead and say "ouch".* Our classroom is a space in which we come to learn, but sometimes that learning can be difficult. Do take a moment to breathe if you feel a negative reaction forming or a button being pressed. Feel free to voice an "ouch" – literally -- if something hits you the wrong way, rather than harbor resentment. You might ask a clarifying question to learn more about that person's viewpoint; the speaker might revise the position or might not realize the consequence of the comment. (Alternatively the person might mean exactly what was said and we have to learn to manage in these circumstances too). Don't hesitate to contact me if you want to talk about class.
4. *Be open to learning.* Rather than being hard-nosed about your stance or ideas, consider the opportunity to reframe, broaden, or tweak your perspective. It's more than ok to say, "I didn't know that" or "You made me think differently" or even "I changed my mind." It's also important to know you have the word "oops" in your vocabulary if you come to realize that your comments had an unintended negative consequence. Part of this class is learning to manage when someone asks us to defend or explicate our position.
5. *Contribute to a respectful norm in the classroom.* Please arrive to class on time and plan to stay for the duration. If you have any concerns about the class, please let me know, preferably before or after class. To improve everyone's engagement, please do not use your laptop, unless you prefer this for taking notes. You should be disconnected from the internet unless we are searching for something on-line collectively. When you surf in class, it is rude and distracting to others. Please put your phone on silent and step outside if you need to use your phone for an emergency.